

KEY TEXTS FROM PENTAGON'S VIETNAM

Following are texts of key documents accompanying the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, covering the opening of the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the first half of 1965. Except where excerpting is indicated, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

Letter From Rostow Favoring Commitment of Troops by U.S.

Personal letter from Walt W. Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, to Secretary McNamara, Nov. 16, 1964, "Military Dispositions and Political Signals."

Following on our conversation of last night I am concerned that too much thought is being given to the actual damage we do in the North, not enough thought to the signal we wish to send.

The signal consists of three parts:

- a) damage to the North is now to be inflicted because they are violating the 1954 and 1962 accords;
- b) we are ready and able to go much further than our initial act of damage;
- c) we are ready and able to meet any level of escalation they might mount in response, if they are so minded.

Four points follow.

1. I am convinced that we should not go forward into the next stage without a US ground force commitment of some kind:

a. The withdrawal of those ground forces could be a critically important part of our diplomatic bargaining position. Ground forces can sit during a conference more easily than we can maintain a series of mounting air and naval pressures.

b. We must make clear that counter escalation by the Communists will run directly into US strength on the ground; and, therefore the possibility of radically extending their position on the ground at the cost of air and naval damage alone, is ruled out.

c. There is a marginal possibility that in attacking the airfield they were thinking two moves ahead; namely, they might be planning a pre-emptive ground force response to an expected US retaliation for the Bien Hoa attack.

2. The first critical military action against North Vietnam should be designed merely to install the principle that they will, from the present forward, be vulnerable to retaliatory attack in the north for continuing to violate the 1954 and 1962 Accords. In other words, we would signal a shift from the principle involved in the Tonkin Gulf re-

sponse. This means that the initial use of force in the north should be as limited and as unsanguinary as possible. It is the installation of the principle that we are initially interested in, not tit for tat.

3. But our force dispositions to accompany an initial retaliatory move against the north should send three further signals lucidly:

a. that we are putting in place a capacity subsequently to step up direct and naval pressure on the north, if that should be required;

b. that we are prepared to face down any form of escalation North Vietnam might mount on the ground; and

c. that we are putting forces into place to exact retaliation directly against Communist China, if Peiping should join in an escalatory response from Hanoi. The latter could take the form of increased aircraft on Formosa plus, perhaps, a carrier force sitting off China distinguished from the force in the South China Sea.

4. The launching of this track, almost certainly, will require the President to explain to our own people and to the world our intentions and objectives. This will also be perhaps the most persuasive form of communication with Ho and Mao. In addition, I am inclined to think the most direct communication we can mount (perhaps via Vientiane and Warsaw) is desirable, as opposed to the use of cut-outs. They should feel they now confront an LBJ who has made up his mind. Contrary to an anxiety expressed at an earlier stage, I believe it quite possible to communicate the limits as well as the seriousness of our intentions without raising seriously the fear in Hanoi that we intend at our initiative to attack the North, to attack the Delta, in China, or seek any other objective than the re-installation of the 1954 and 1962 Accords.

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minds as to the view in Hanoi and Peiping of the Southeast Asia problem. I agree almost completely with SNIE 10-3-64 of October 9. Here are the critical passages:

"While they will seek to exploit and encourage the deteriorating situation in Saigon, they probably will avoid actions that would in their view unduly increase the chances of a major US response against North Vietnam (DRV) or Communist China. We are almost certain that both Hanoi and Peiping are anxious not to become involved in the kind of war in which the great weight of superior US weaponry could be brought against them. Even if Hanoi and Peiping estimated that the US would not use nuclear weapons against them, they could not be sure of this. . . .

"In the face of new US pressures against the DRV, further actions by Hanoi and Peiping would be based to a considerable extent on their estimate of US intentions, i.e., whether the US was actually determined to increase its pressures as necessary. Their estimates on this point are probably uncertain, but we believe that fear of provoking severe measures by the US would lead them to temper their responses with a good deal of caution. . . .

"If despite Communist efforts, the US attacks continued, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether it was not better to suspend their support of Viet Cong military action rather than suffer the destruction of their major military facilities and the industrial sector of their economy. In the belief that their favor in South Vietnam, they might

JUN 15 1971

White House Nervous Over War Secrets

By Don Bacon

WASHINGTON — (NNS) — The McNamara report on Vietnam has surfaced at an inopportune time for the Nixon Administration, which already is under great pressure to speed up American withdrawal from the war.

The mammoth, previously secret document on the evolution of the war, being published piecemeal by the New York Times, will provide a rich new source of data for the antiwar movement, particularly in the Senate, which votes tomorrow on an amendment to force a United States pullout by the end of 1971.

White House officials accepted the disclosure of the report with nervous resignation.

Already beset with Vietnam credibility problems of its own, according to a recent Gallup Poll, the Nixon Administration will have to wait and see whether this new shadow on the Johnson period in Vietnam further erodes the public's tolerance for continuing the war.

Perhaps the report's most damaging aspect — at least the part that seems to worry the White House the most — is the disclosure that the U.S. government worked out a strategy, months before the so-called August, 1964, Tonkin Gulf attack on two U.S. destroyers, to get American

forces actively involved in the fighting.

A policy of deception surfaces in the wealth of official cablegrams, memoranda and other documents accompanying the 3000-page analysis, written by teams of Defense Department specialists under orders of the then secretary, Robert McNamara.

The report and accompanying documents constitute, it is believed, the most complete existing account of how the U.S. involvement in Vietnam grew and how the U.S. began to plan for overt war a year before the extent of American involvement was publicly disclosed.

The report, which carried "a high level (security) classification," according to a

White House source, had very limited circulation when it was completed in late 1968. Perhaps as few as six copies, including the one obtained by the Times, exist.

The Nixon White House did not use this particular report in drafting its own history of the Vietnam involvement in early 1969, prior to the incoming President's determination of a new Vietnam war policy.

The copy earmarked for the White House apparently

went with outgoing President Johnson when he returned to Texas. Another copy was delivered by the Pentagon to the White House yesterday, a day after the Times began its series.

White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said yesterday that the administration had found no surprises in the report, and that the National Security Council had had access to the same basic documents when it was drafting its own war history in 1969.

Rather than relying on past studies, "the President felt it was essential to undertake our own assessment," Ziegler said.

Ziegler attempted to minimize the overall importance of the Defense Department-prepared report, pointing out that it was only an internal study by one department, and did not contain assessments of other key agencies, such as the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council.

"The President," Ziegler said, "did not focus on this specific report before it appeared in the Times."

But, the press secretary strongly implied, Nixon was fully aware of the chronology of U.S. involvement through other reports and documents.

"I think it is safe to assume," Ziegler said, "that

that complete information was available to us."

Ziegler declined to comment on a question as to whether this administration repudiated the policies of deception that, according to the official documents, were in effect in 1964 and subsequent years through 1967.

Nor would he respond directly to questions on the effect the disclosures might have on this administration's problems of Vietnam credibility.

A Gallup Poll, published May 23, found that 67 percent of the respondents believed the administration was not "telling the public all it should know about the war in Vietnam."

WATERTOWN, N.Y.

TIMES

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"Vietnam Archive"

Many documents along with thousands of pages of analysis concerning the American involvement in the Vietnam War have come to light and are being printed in the New York Times. The White House was unaware of the research and writing. It was undertaken in 1967 and 1968 under orders of the then Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara. The study extended to 2,500,000 words and may number only ten or 15 copies.

White House assistant Henry A. Kissinger never heard of the study until he read about it in the New York Times. Others have either protested its existence or, knowing about it, claim that its revelation violates security because some of the papers contained are labeled Top Secret.

Secretary McNamara ordered 30 or 40 governmental officials to review all the documents, conversations, memoranda which concerned the American relationship with Vietnam. This was not a full time job for these experts. They plugged away for more than a year, writing 40 book-length volumes with documentation from cablegrams, in house debate and the public and private observations of officials in the various departments of government, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the C.I.A.

This may not be the definitive study of America and Vietnam. It is probably the closest thing to such study that the public will ever have access to. If it weren't for the New York Times, all this data, together with its interpretation by government experts, would never have appeared. Why the government should be sensitive about the revelations is

not apparent because the present administration was not even in office when the inquiry completed its effort. Secretary of Defense McNamara was not in office. He is reported to have received a copy after he became chairman of the World Bank. He looked at it briefly and sent it to the National Archives where today McNamara's own copy is still in storage.

While the details of its development and publication are of interest, some of its conclusions are significant. The Vietnam policy of the United States grew out of the Truman administration's decision to give military aid to France which was conducting a colonial war in Indo-China against the Communist Viet Minh.

The Eisenhower administration decided to rescue South Vietnam from falling to Communism. Next came the Kennedy administration which enlarged the commitment of America from limited risk to a broad risk commitment. Then the Johnson administration began to plan overt war in 1964, the very year when the president was attacking his G.O.P. adversary, Senator Barry Goldwater, for his efforts to escalate the war.

The study shows further that the government intelligence agencies, the C.I.A., and that of the Defense department, warned that the government's policy would not work with respect to the Viet Cong insurgency. The same intelligence study indicated that bombing would become militarily ineffective within a few months.

The first military equipment from America to go to Vietnam was in 1950, and thereafter more and more was sent, followed by first, advisers, and then American soldiers who used the gear.

The joint chiefs almost 20 years ago warned that a successful defense of South Vietnam could not be guaranteed under the 1954 Geneva accord. The joint chiefs are said to have agreed to send American military advisors only on the insistence of the then Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. Both President Kennedy and President Johnson were described as choosing partial measures of military proposals that would only work if they were undertaken as packages rather than being adopted piecemeal.

The study also found that the American government was unable to persuade the South Vietnamese to make the political and economic reforms that were necessary in order to win the allegiance of the people.

When the study was completed, the Assistant Secretary of Defense was Paul Warnke who was in charge of security affairs. He says today that the "purpose (of the study) was to try to preserve history before it disappeared." It is good journalism that the New York Times has delved so deeply into the Pentagon study. Otherwise, it might have disappeared because such analyses have been known in the past to have become lost because of inattention. Taking advantage of inattention, a knowledgeable mole knows where the papers are hidden and decides to chew them up.